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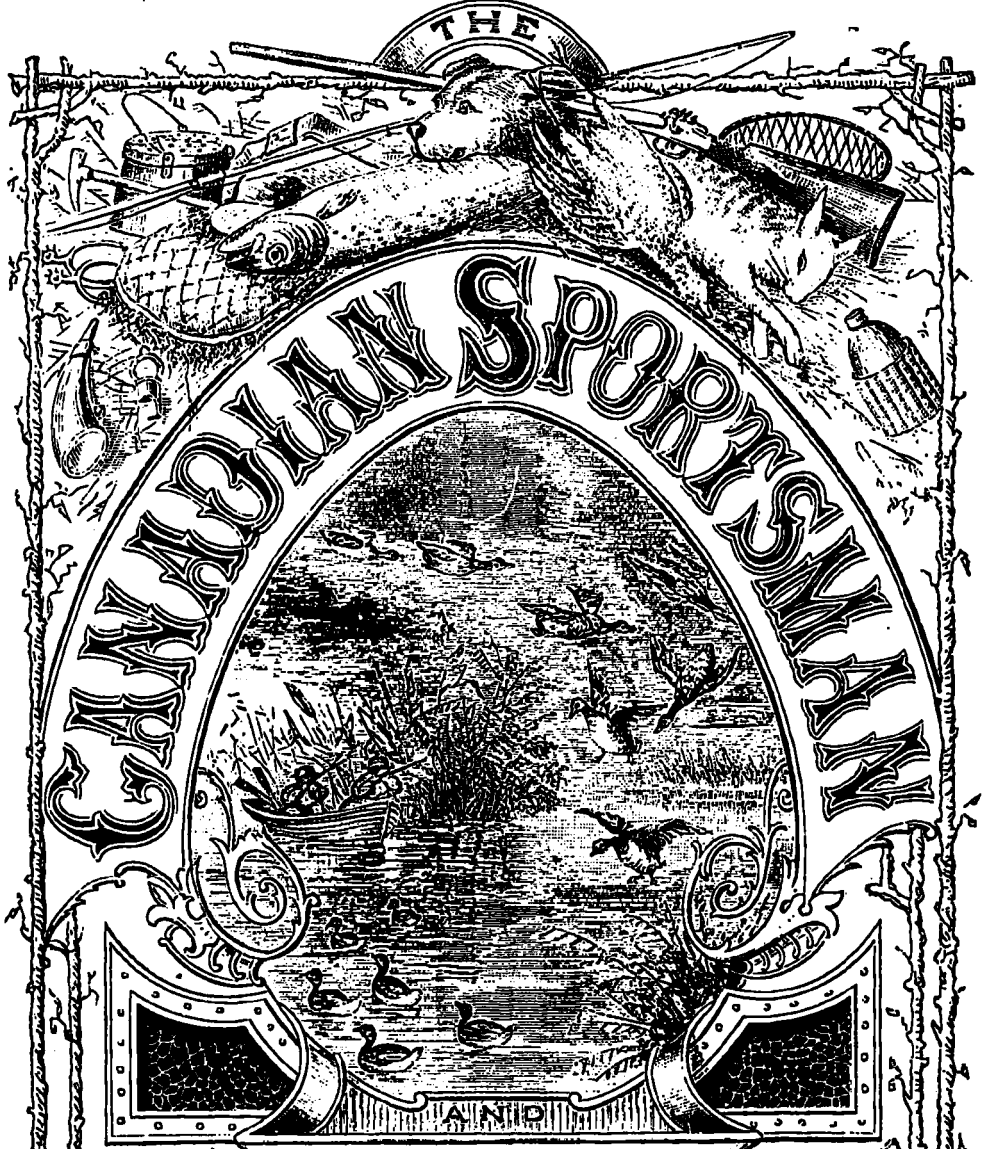
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THE

CANADIAN SPORTS AND NATURALIST



AND

NATURALIST

A
MONTHLY
JOURNAL



VOL. II.
No. 2.
1882.

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THE CANADIAN SPORTSMAN AND NATURALIST.

No. 2.

MONTREAL, FEBRUARY, 1882.

VOL. II.

WILLIAM COUPER, Editor.

TO OUR CORRESPONDENTS.

We shall be pleased to receive communications upon all matters relating to Sport and Natural History, and our columns will always be open to friendly discussions upon these subjects. We have to request, however, that our Correspondents omit all personalities from their manuscripts, otherwise we shall be obliged to refrain from publishing them.

ED.

TOLING DUCKS.

Some birds are very susceptible to the promptings of curiosity, and advantage of this is taken by sportsmen to decoy them by very simple devices. The system of toling ducks, though not very generally known in Canada, has been practised in England and the United States for a great many years past.

Toling consists simply in attracting the birds to the shore, where the gunner remains concealed at some convenient spot, and is performed by a dog, taught to run up and down the beach, where the ducks are feeding, at some point not too far from shore. The discovery of this mode of decoying ducks was quite accidental, being attributed to a circumstance noticed by a sportsman, who, concealed behind a blind, patiently awaiting the approach of some Canvas Backs, observed that they suddenly lifted up their heads and moved towards the shore. Wondering at this unusual procedure he naturally looked around to discover the cause, and observed a young fox sporting on the river bank; and the ducks, all engrossed to gaze upon him, were steering their course directly for the shore. This mode of decoying, however, is confined to very few species of ducks, and can only be successfully practised early in the season,

before the birds have become too wary. Most dogs require very little training to become adepts at toling, and will usually keep in motion on the shore if they see a flock of ducks approaching. Canvas Back, Blue Bill and Red Head are the species generally procured, as they are also the most easily attracted by decoys. The writer, while snipe shooting at Lake of Two Mountains in the Autumn of 1878, was a witness to the success of this method of attracting ducks. Having seen a large flock of Red Heads feeding at a distance of about four hundred yards from the shore, a hiding place was selected, and a small pointer dog which accompanied us was allowed to run along the beach. At sight of the ducks the dog betrayed great eagerness and ran excitedly to and fro on the river bank, the ducks in the meantime perceived his movements and almost immediately turned their course towards shore. In a few minutes, more than fifty Red Heads were within range of our guns, some of them, in fact, not more than ten yards from the dog, and all apparently greatly interested in his motions. We had deferred firing as they were pretty well scattered in the water, but at last could restrain ourselves no longer, and as the smoke from our guns rolled away we gathered up five birds, which we considered not a bad result from our first experience in toling.

WALLACE.

CRACK SHOTS.

Some sportsmen enjoy the enviable reputation of being what are termed "crack shots," they have acquired such a degree of skill in the art of shooting that if a bird rises within range of their death-dealing tubes, no matter how dense the cover, or how difficult the shot, the unfortunate bird is doomed to destruction and is speedily consigned to the depths of their game bags! At least such is

often the impression of those who are not initiated into all the mysteries and uncertainties of shooting, and the "crack shot" is usually too proud of his reputation to dispel this illusion, or to keep any count of the misses he may make. Some few years ago the writer was in the habit of visiting a place not many miles from Montreal, and where there was a stretch of woods extending three or four miles in length, and in which, at that time, there were a good many Ruffed Grouse. During one of my visits the birds were pretty numerous, but I had by noon only succeeded in bagging two brace, one of these being a "pot shot," while I had missed at least a dozen shots, the cover in most places being very dense. While pursuing my sport numerous shots were fired from the other end of the wood, three or four reports in rapid succession made me aware that more than one gun was being employed, and that game was apparently plentiful. In a short time the hunting party approached near enough to enable me to recognize three well-known sportsmen and reputed "crack shots,"—feeling ashamed to appear before these gentlemen with only two brace, I quietly turned about and walked in another direction,—they had fired at least twenty shots, and from their "reputation" I concluded must have bagged nearly as many birds. Some days after, however, I happened to meet one of the gentlemen, and did not tell him of the result of my day's sport until I had ascertained that his party had, with a score of shots, only succeeded in bagging "one bird." I have since then been a firm believer in the uncertainty of Ruffed Grouse shooting and can confidently recommend this sport to any one ambitious to acquire the reputation of being considered a "crack shot."—WALLACE.

LOBSTER CULTURE.

The subject of Lobster culture has taken up the attention of Prof. S. F. Baird and the Fish Commissioners of the State of Maine. The Professor says :—

"There is a very great promise of success in cultivating lobsters on a large scale by inclosing them in small salt water bays, where there is a free circulation of water, and the egress of the lobsters can be prevented by grating or netting. They can be fed, as I understand, very largely upon clams, and will not only grow very rapidly under such circumstances, but carry on the propagation of the young. The young can either be kept in the inclosure or go out to sea and increase the supply in the vicinity. This is, by far, the most feasible way of solving the problem in regard to the depletion of lobsters along the coast of Maine and the Provinces. Is there any provision in the fishery laws of Maine by which an individual undertaking this work can prevent unauthorized persons from going in and reaping the benefit when the individual cultivator actually owns or leases the adjacent shore? Of course no man will be willing to go into the business unless he can be protected, and if there is no provision in Maine, as there is in Massachusetts, by which the Fish Commissioners can lease a pond to particular individuals for the purpose of propagating fish and secure to them thereby exclusive rights in the waters, it would be well to have such a provision, with the understanding that it is to apply to salt waters as well as to fresh. If the experiment proves as successful as I confidently anticipate and believe it will be, it will add enormously to the resources of the State, as there are hundreds of localities where such ponds could be established to the best advantage. Of course I suggest no interference with high seas navigation."

In the September and October numbers (Vol. I.) of this journal, we made a few remarks on the Canadian Lobster Fisheries. It may be further stated in connection with the subject, that in consideration of the extent of this industry in our Maritime Provinces, it would be well for those engaged in the business to consider the propriety of cultivating the lobster, as suggested by Professor Baird. There are many available localities along the Gulf seaboard where the cultivation of this valuable *crustacean* can be carried on with success. For instance, the Bay of Gaspié, and at several places on the coast near Percé and Bonaventure. Prince Edward Island has also many excellent sites for this object.

Then, where can they be more profitably cultivated than on Anticosti? The numerous bays around the island are, at this day, teeming with them, and we are pleased to learn that a Company from New Brunswick is to take advantage of this fishery next season.—C.

THE ENGLISH SPARROW.

This European introduction, which at one time was looked upon with so much favour, is now pretty generally regarded as a pest; careful observations made during recent years having proved conclusively that these birds possess few redeeming qualities to compensate for the great amount of damage they are credited with doing. The Colony of Australia appears to realize the serious disadvantages of their introduction, their increase there has been so rapid, and their depredations so marked, that they are now considered an equal nuisance with the imported rabbit, and in that prolific land will probably be as difficult to get rid of. The Australian Government has lately offered a bounty of sixpence per dozen for the heads, and two and sixpence per hundred for the eggs, which will probably have the effect of reducing their numbers.

Here, in Canada, our severe winters have, to a certain extent, checked their increase, but they are in some places already too numerous, and ere many years will, no doubt, multiply to such an extent that we, also, may be obliged to adopt some means for their extermination.—WALLACE.

NEW BRUNSWICK SALMON RIVERS.

THE RIGHT TO FISH FOR SALMON.

A landowner, named Phair, was arrested while fishing with rod and line for salmon in the Miramichi river, opposite his own property. The arrest was made by W. H. Venning, the Inspector of Fisheries for New Brunswick. Phair refused to give up his fishing rod, &c., to the officer, but he yielded

when Venning presented a revolver. Phair brought an action for damages for the seizure of his tackle, and the suit was brought before the Circuit Court of Fredericton. The attorney for the Government moved for a nonsuit, on two grounds; first, that the defendant was acting in the capacity of a Justice of the Peace, and was entitled to one month's notice of action; and second, that the plaintiff was illegally fishing. The judge overruled both these objections, and charged in favour of the plaintiff on points of law, but he disagreed on the matter of damages. The jury, however, decided to award \$511. The Government or the Chief of the Fishery Department, with the consent of the Privy Council, should recognize riparian rights in navigable or unnavigable rivers where fish occur. It will save money and litigation, and the earlier this annoyance is abated the better for both parties.—C.

INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES EXHIBITION.

The approaching Fisheries Exhibition to be held in Edinburgh, Scotland, next April, will be open to all countries. It is under the patronage of the Duke of Edinburgh and the Highland Agricultural Society of Scotland. It will include everything connected with or as an illustration of the fisheries of the world. The exhibits are to be divided into twelve classes, embracing models of boats; of fishing-boat harbours and fishermen's houses; nets, lines, rods, artificial bait, tackle, piscicultural apparatus, fish ova, and young fry; stuffed fish and aquatic birds; paintings and casts of fish models, of fish passes and ladders; life boats, fishermen's dress and equipments; specimens of fresh, cured and canned fish; samples of preparation for preserving fish and specimens of such results; models and other means of illustrating the life, habits and social condition of those engaged in the fisheries; treatises on the pollution of rivers and the best means of remedying the evil. A loan collection will be included, and the Asso-

ciation will pay all charges of transportation in connection with this branch. There can be no doubt that the exhibition will be a most interesting one and will command widespread interest and attention.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND FISHERIES.

There has been a falling off in the catch of Mackerel, Cod and Herring this year, and the Salmon taken by the islanders are not worth reporting. Mackerel canning has become quite an industry, the annual average number of cans being about 200,000 put up on the Island. Of Lobsters 6,832,865 cans were filled this year. There is a reason for the present scarcity of Salmon in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Why is it that from all portions of the North and South coasts we have reports regarding the rarity of this noble fish during the past three seasons? Cannot some one help us to discover the cause?

THE COMMON DOVE.

(*Zenaidura Carolinensis*.)

We have received the head, wings and tail of a specimen of the above bird shot by Mr. Comeau at Godbout, on the north shore of the Lower St. Lawrence. The occurrence of this Dove so far north is another illustration showing that as the Canadian climate gradually moderates, many birds which were heretofore in a great measure, confined to southern and western regions, will, eventually change their ranges of migration. If we had a few more close observers like Mr. Comeau, doubtless our rare species would be discovered visiting our northern forests.—C.

FISH AND GAME PROTECTION CLUB OF THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.

TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL MEETING.

Mr. G. H. Mathews, Secretary of the Club, presented the annual report, from which it appeared that the Club had done good work during the past year, and was now in a flourishing condition.

From this report it appeared that the Club had commenced the year with a deficit of \$61.13; receipts during the year had been \$361.20; expenditure, \$251.21; balance on hand, \$143.86. The membership stood as follows at the end of the respective years:—1878, 30; 1879, 93; 1880, 101; 1881, 176.

The report was adopted.

The election of officers was then proceeded with, resulting as follows, viz.:—President, Ald. J. C. Wilson, re-elected; Vice-President, Mr. E. C. Monk, re-elected; Treasurer, Mr. W. H. Binton, re-elected; Secretary, Mr. G. H. Mathews, re-elected. Committee—Messrs. F. J. Brady, R. H. Kill y, H. R. Ives, I. H. Stearns, B. Goodacre, A. N. Shewan, L. A. Boyer, Selkirk Cross, Wm. Crowther, Chas. Stimson, W. S. Macfarlane, Fred. Henshaw, Jas. Appleton, Hon. J. R. Thibaudan and Alderic Deschamp.

A Committee, consisting of the officers and members of the Club, was then appointed, with power to add to their number, to make arrangements for a picnic during the coming summer.

ORNITHOLOGY OF THE ISLAND OF MONTREAL.

By ERNEST D. WINTLE.

The following list of birds, frequenting the Island of Montreal, has been prepared chiefly from observations made by the writer, extending over a period of several years. It is probable that a few species have escaped notice, as many remain only a short time on the island during their migrations north and south.

TURDIDÆ.—THRUSHS.

1. *Turdus migratorius*, Robin. Common. Arrives in March. Nests in May, June and July.
2. *Turdus mustelinus*, Wood Thrush. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in May and June.
3. *Turdus Pallasi*, Hermit Thrush. Rare. Arrives in May. Nests in June.
4. *Turdus Swainsoni*, Olive-backed Thrush. Rare. Arrives in May. Nests in June.
5. *Turdus swainsoni*, Wilson's Thrush. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.
6. *Mimus Carolinensis*, Catbird. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June and July.
7. *Thryothorus rufus*, Brown Thrush. Becoming numerous. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

SAXICOLIDÆ.—STONE CHATS AND BLUEBIRDS.

8. *Sialia sialis*, Eastern Bluebird. Common. Arrives in March. Nests in May, and raises two broods.

SYLVIIDÆ.—SYLVIAS.

9. *Regulus calendula*, Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Arrives in April. Abundant in spring and autumn.
10. *Regulus satrapa*, Golden-crested Kinglet. Arrives in April. Abundant in spring and autumn.

PARIDÆ.—TITMICE, CHICKADEES.

11. *Parus atricapillus*, Black-capped Chickadee. Not very common. Breeds on the Island.

SITTIDÆ.—NUTHATCHES.

12. *Sitta Carolinensis*, White-bellied Nuthatch. Winter and summer resident. Nest, 20th April, with 9 eggs.
13. *Sitta Canadensis*, Red-bellied Nuthatch. Winter and summer resident. Nests in April.
14. *Certhia familiaris*, Brown Creeper. Not common. Arrives in April. Nests in May.

TROGLODYTIDÆ.—WRENS.

15. *Troglodytes aedon*, House wren. Not common.
16. *Anthus hyemalis*, Winter Wren. Not common. Arrives in April. Breeds on the Island.

ALAUDIDÆ.—LARKS.

17. *Eremophila alpestris*, Shore Lark. Nest found beginning of April with young; snow on ground. Abundant in autumn.

MOTACILLIDÆ.—WARTBILLS.

18. *Anthus ludovicianus*, Titlark. Abundant in spring and autumn.

SYLVICOLIDÆ.—WARBLERS.

19. *Mniotilta varia*, Black and white Creeper. Common. Arrives early in May. Nests in June.

20. *Parula Americana*, Blue yellow-backed Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

21. *Dendroica aestiva*, Summer Warbler. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

22. *Helminthophaga chrysoptera*, Blue golden-winged Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

23. *Dendroica virens*, Black-throated green Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

24. *Dendroica cerulea*, Black-throated blue Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

25. *Dendroica coronata*, Yellow-rumped Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

26. *Dendroica Blackburnii*, Blackburnian Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

27. *Dendroica striata*, Black-poll Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

28. *Dendroica castanea*, Bay-breasted Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

29. *Dendroica Pennsylvanica*, Chestnut-sided Warbler. Arrives in May. Nest 11 June, 3 eggs and 1 cowbird's egg, all incubated.

30. *Dendroica maculosa*, Black and yellow Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

31. *Dendroica pinus*, Pine-creeping Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

32. *Seturus auricapillus*, Golden-crowned Thrush. Common. Arrives in May. Nest, 6 June, 4 eggs.

33. *Geothlypis trichas*, Maryland yellow-throat. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

34. *Geothlypis Philadelphica*, Mourning Warbler. Arrives early in spring.

35. *Myiadestes Canadensis*, Canadian Fly-catcher Warbler. Arrives in May. Breeds here.

36. *Setophaga ruticilla*, Redstart. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

TANAGRIDÆ.—TANAGERS.

37. *Pyranga rubra*, Scarlet Tanager. Not common. Arrives in May.

HIRUNDINIDÆ.—SWALLOWS.

38. *Hirundo horreorum*, Barn Swallow. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

39. *Tachycineta bicolor*, White-bellied Swallow. Common. Arrives in April. Nests in May and June.

40. *Petrochelidon lunifrons*, Cave Swallow. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

41. *Cotyle riparia*, Bank Swallow. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in May and June.

42. *Progne purpurea*, Purple Martin. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

AMPELIDÆ.—WAXWINGS, ETC.

43. *Ampeles garrulus*, Bohemian Waxwing. Rare visitant.

44. *Ampeles cedrorum*, Cedar bird. Common summer resident, occasionally seen during winter. Nests in July.

VERONIDÆ.—VIREOS, OR GREENLETTERS.

45. *Vireo olivaceus*, Red-eyed Vireo. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

LANIIDÆ.—SHRIKES.

46. *Lanius borealis*, Great Northern Shrike. Occasionally seen during winter. Nests found in May.

47. *Lanius ludovicianus*, Logger-head Shrike. Has been shot here.

FRINGILLIDÆ.—FINCHES, ETC.

48. *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*, Pine Grosbeak. Autumn and winter visitant.

49. *Corpodacus purpureus*, Purple Finch. Not common. Arrives in May. Nests late in June.

50. *Loxia leucoptera*, White-winged Crossbill. Not common. Summer and winter resident. Nests end of March.

51. *Loxia curvirostris*, Common Crossbill. Autumn and winter visitant.

52. *Agelaius phoeniceus*, Red-poll Linnet. Autumn and winter visitant.

53. *Chrysomitris pinus*, Pine Linnet. Arrives early in spring.

54. *Chrysomitris tridactyla*, American Goldfinch. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in July.

55. *Plectrophenax nivalis*, Snow Bunting. Autumn and winter visitant.

56. *Poencetes gramineus*, Grass Finch. Common. Arrives in May. Nests end of May.

57. *Melospiza palustris*, Swamp Sparrow. Not common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

58. *Melospiza melodia*, Song Sparrow. Common. Arrives in April. Nests in May, June and July.

59. *Junco hyemalis*, Snowbird. Common. Arrives in April. Nest, 15 June, 2 eggs.

60. *Spizella monticola*, Tree Sparrow. Not common.

61. *Spizella socialis*, Chipping Sparrow. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June and July.

62. *Spizella pusilla*, Field Sparrow. Arrives early in Spring.

63. *Zonotrichia albicollis*, White-throated Sparrow. Not common. Arrives early in spring. Nests in April.

64. *Zonotrichia leucophrys*, White-crowned Sparrow. Not common. Arrives early in spring.

65. *Passer domesticus*, English Sparrow. Abundant. Nests very early in spring, and throughout the summer.

66. *Gonaphes Indoriviana*, Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Rare, spring visitant.

67. *Cyanospiza cyanea*, Indigo bird. Common. Nests in June and July.

ICTERIDÆ.—AMERICAN STARLINGS.

68. *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, Bobolink. Common. Arrives early in spring. Nests in May.

69. *Melospiza ater*, Cowbird. Common. Arrives in April. Have found its eggs in nests of Phoebe, Wood Thrush, Redstart, Summer Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Song Sparrow.

70. *Agelaius phoeniceus*, Red-winged Blackbird. Common. Nests in May and June.

71. *Icterus Baltimore*, Baltimore Oriole. Become common; Arrives in May. Nests in June.

72. *Scolecophagus ferruginus*, Rusty Grackle. Spring and autumn visitant.

73. *Quiscalus purpureus*, Crow Blackbird. Common. Arrives in April. Nests in May.

CORVIDÆ.—CROWS, JAYS, ETC.

74. *Corvus Americanus*, Common Crow. Arrives in March. Nests in April. A few usually remain throughout the winter.

75. *Cyanus cristatus*, Blue Jay. Autumn visitant.

76. *Perisoreus Canadensis*, Canada Jay. Autumn visitant.

TYRANNIDÆ.—FLYCATCHERS.

77. *Tyrannus Carolinensis*, Kingbird. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

78. *Mniotilta cinerea*, Great crested Flycatcher. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

79. *Sayornis fusces*, Phoebe. Common. Arrives in April. Nests in May.

80. *Contopus borealis*, Olive-sided Flycatcher. Not common.

81. *Contopus virens*, Wood Pewee. Common. Arrives in May. Nests in June.

82. *Empidonax flaviventris*, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. Not common.

CAPRIMULGIDÆ.—GOATUCKERS.

83. *Antrostomus vociferus*, Whip-poor-will. Rare visitant.

84. *Chordeiles Virginiana*, Nighthawk. Common. Arrives 15th May. Nests end of May on gravelled roofs of houses in the city.

CYPSELIDÆ.—SWIFTS.

85. *Chelura pelagica*, Chimney Swift. Common. Arrives in April. Nests in May, in chimneys of houses in the city.

TROCHILIDÆ.—HUMMINGBIRDS.

86. *Trochilus colubris*, Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Common. Arrives early in May. Nests end of May.

ALCEDINIDÆ.—KINGFISHERS.

87. *Ceryle alcyon*, Belted Kingfisher. Common. Arrives in April. Nests in May.

CUCULIDÆ.—CUCKOOS.

88. *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*, Black-billed Cuckoo. Common some seasons, and scarce others. Nests end of May.

89. *Coccyzus Americanus*, Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Very rare, only one specimen is recorded to have been shot.

PICIDÆ.—WOODPECKERS.

90. *Hyalotanus pileatus*, Pilated Woodpecker. Rare autumn or winter visitant.

91. *Picus villosus*, Hairy Woodpecker. Regular spring and autumn visitant. Occasionally seen in summer.

92. *Picus pubescens*, Downy Woodpecker. Common. Winter and summer resident. Nests end of May.

93. *Ploceus arcticus*, Black-backed Woodpecker. Casual visitant.

94. *Sphyrapicus varius*, Yellow-bellied Woodpecker. Common. Nests in May and June.

95. *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*, Red-headed Woodpecker. Not common. Nests in May.

96. *Colaptes auratus*, Golden-winged Woodpecker. Common. Arrives in April. Nests in May.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Correspondence.

ROBINS AGAIN.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN SPORTSMAN AND NATURALIST:—

SIR,—The October number of your journal having failed to reach my hands until to-day when, through your politeness, I received a supplementary copy, I have only just read John H. Garnier's letter on "Robins again," which appears in that impression. With the courtesy which pervades the whole of his communication he remarks that he is "surprised and sorry to see such ignorance exhibited by me," but he does not favour me by specifying the nature of that ignorance. I gather, however, from his very rambling letter, that he imagines I have confounded the English Redbreast with the American Robin. I need not assure you, Sir, that I did nothing of the kind, and that the accusation of ignorance is as gratuitous as it is unmannerly. As John H. Garnier, however, has thought fit to prefer this accusation against me, I may perhaps be permitted to counsel that person, before he hazards such a charge again, to be a little more careful in respect of his own communications. For instance, I would recommend him to study English grammar a little, and I would advise him to make himself acquainted with the phraseology of sportsmen, and not speak of "a pair of rabbits;" and above all, I would suggest that when he quotes Latin he would get some one who knows a little of that language to scrutinize his quotation, and then perhaps he will not make Sallust appear to have been as unfamiliar with the Latin grammar as he evidently is himself. I might have answered his letter more at length but that his style of writing is not such as to make any gentleman desirous of entering into a paper controversy with him. His pen does not want the "additional vim" with which

he threatens me, without, however, alarming me, but it certainly *does* require a little additional culture.

VINCENT CLEMENTI.

Peterboro, January 12, 1882.

NOTE.—With the above letter from Mr. Clementi we must now close our columns to any further correspondence on this subject.—Ed.

THE MESSINA QUAIL.

DEAR SIR,—From the extensive orders sent to Sicily, for migratory quail, it is evident that earnest efforts will be made next spring to introduce and naturalize in Canada this valuable bird. Col. Rhodes, who takes a lively interest in the success of the scheme, now absent from the city, has forwarded me the enclosed directions for keeping quail in confinement, previous to letting them loose in our woods. I crave a corner in your journal for their insertion.

J. M. L.

Quebec, Jan. 20, 1882.

QUAIL IN CONFINEMENT.

To Editor *Forest and Stream* :

Having kept quail in confinement several seasons for stock, I will give my experience. I make a square coop large enough to keep from eight to ten pairs. Two-thirds of the way I put in a partition, with a hole in centre of this partition large enough for them to run through into the rear part. This hole contains a slide-door from top on outside, so that the birds can be shut in while cleaning the front, and *vice versa*. The front is made entirely of slats, placed so near that they cannot get their heads through to injure them. The back part is made quite dark, with door for cleaning; in front part is a trough to slide, with end projecting so as to give fresh water *often*. They require their dust bath in confinement every day. This I provided for by sweeping very dry dirt from some sunny places about a shed, placing it in the front part of the coop. For feed, oats, buckwheat and wheat screenings, given alternately. I made my coops six (6) feet long, four feet wide and two high. Top is of boards with holes bored in. These coops two men carry every morning into a warm sunny place, and at night they are returned into a building and placed on stools as high as convenient, and are made to stand well out from the side of the building.

The legs of bench should be covered with tin or something to prevent rats or mice getting at the birds. In the above manner I have kept them without losing a single bird.

WARREN LOWE.

West Haven, January 6, 1882.

NOTE.—The introduction of these Quail into Canada has not yet been a success; most of the birds having been liberated late in the season. Some few broods were reared, but it has not yet been proved whether any returned during the following spring. Further efforts are now being made by keeping the birds in confinement during winter and liberating them as early as possible in spring; a better opportunity will then be afforded them of maturing their young. A gentleman of this city has had a number in confinement during last year and experienced no difficulty in keeping them.

THE RED CROSSBILL.

(*Loxia curvirostra*.—Lax.)

As comparatively little is known of the history of the Crossbills, I send a statement of my observations. About twenty years ago the above species was a common resident in this vicinity. During the months of December and January they gathered in small flocks, and evidently commenced to pair. Occasionally I have seen the white-winged species, but these never associated with their congeners. Every one is familiar with the peculiar flight of the yellow bird (*Chrysomitris tristis*) during the nuptial season. Exactly in a similar manner the red Crossbill spreads its wings and tail, and flies in a fantastic manner on sunny days. The female, in the mean time, may be seen perched on some neighbouring sprig or prominent place seeming to enjoy the gambols of the male. Early in the morning they betake themselves to the hemlock, pine, or tamarac ridges, and may be seen at all altitudes and in all positions on the cones in search of food. Sometimes, head downwards, or holding with claws and bill directly beneath the cones, and tearing the seed from its covering with much ease. Their motions are graceful, and have nothing of the jerk peculiar to the Sitta or Picoidæ.—About two o'clock, they fly to some neighbouring place to pick sand, and I have seen as many as two hundred at one time about ash heaps, on bare spots on the road, or

on the banks of a stream where they could obtain sand. They are harmless, familiar little birds, and are very quiet in their manners, as I never saw any encounters, nor those battles that so often occur among English sparrows and other inches. The nests are generally placed near the extremity of a hemlock or cedar branch, and are large and very thick for the size of the builder. They are variously lined with bits of small roots, fibres of vegetables, hair, feathers and the like, but of course vegetable fibres predominate. I have frequently seen the head and a little portion of the tail of the bird project over the side of a nest, when on, or nearly on a level, but never from below. Although I saw numbers of nests, I never obtained any eggs. The fact is I never tried, as the thought did not at the time occur to me. I, however, obtained many fine and beautiful specimens, of *L. curvirostris* as well as *L. leucoptera*. These birds breed early in March or towards the end of January and during February. I am unable to state exactly how many eggs they lay, nor the period of incubation. On the 24th of March, 1862, I saw a female crossbill feeding her young; there were four of them, closely huddled together on a maple twig. I shot three of them, the fourth and the old bird escaping seemingly unhurt. I carefully examined the young; they were of a greenish brown color, and there was down on the ends of their feathers, especially on the head and back. The tail was more than half grown, and the flight of the young bird that escaped, seemed very strong. The bills of the young were not in the least crossed, and this proves that the beaks take this form as they arrive at maturity; the appearance was like that of any young finch. It strikes me, that their bills were too tender to procure food, and that the parents fed them for a longer period than is general in the finch family. But since that period the axe has done its work. We find no more of this species in the neighbourhood as it has little to live on. Occasionally in Spring before the foliage comes on the trees, families of five or six pass around, but every year they are becoming more scarce, and I have neither heard nor seen one for four or five seasons past. The nest, is, as has been stated, very thick, compact, and large; nature has taught the bird so to construct it, as otherwise the eggs and young birds would be frozen. The crops of the three procured were quite distended with hemlock seeds. The external covering in every case was removed and each

seed was bruised, and covered with a peculiarly glutinous fluid, either so given by the old bird, or produced in the crop of the young ones; perhaps as in parent parrots. Although these birds chirp continually while on the wing, yet I never recollect hearing them sing, and they are very silent when on the ground and when feeding on trees. But, the moment a note of alarm is given, they rise altogether with much noise, and after flying about for a moment, to see that danger has passed, they settle down, frequently on the same tree, in perfect silence, seeming intent in procuring food. The peculiarity of the bill, is wonderfully designed to open the scales of fir cones, on which this family feeds, and this point has been discussed by abler pens. But though one is sad to know that they are very seldom seen in this locality, yet noble farms and happy homes take the place of the wild woods where these birds formerly had their habitation. It seems remarkable that crossbills should breed so early in the year. It is not at all strange in any of these months, to see the thermometer frequently below zero. Their food is at this time abundant, and continues so until summer, and it seems improbable that food supply is the cause of such early incubation. These statements are true, but why this little bird breeds during the coldest period of a Canadian winter, who can tell? Mr. Maynard in his "Naturalists' Guide," mentions a gentleman in Maine who obtained the eggs. This Naturalist, whose name I forget, also avers that he procured the eggs in February, and if I only had such a chance as in 1862 to collect, I would certainly lay past a large store of them. Crossbills are indifferent to cold, and I have observed them, in a heavy snow storm, feeding with great composure. I have seen them in considerable numbers in Beverly township near Hamilton. I presume they migrate north in summer. I never remember seeing them before December, nor after the beginning of May. I should like to see the observations of others on the life history of this species, especially any theories or facts that might help to elucidate the cause of its winter incubation. I have heard parties deny that the crossbill or any other little bird, could incubate so early, but this is because they have not had the opportunity to prove it as I have; and, I confess, I was skeptical till I saw the birds, both male and female incubating, and obtained the young.

J. H. GARNIER.

LUCKNOW, January, 1882.

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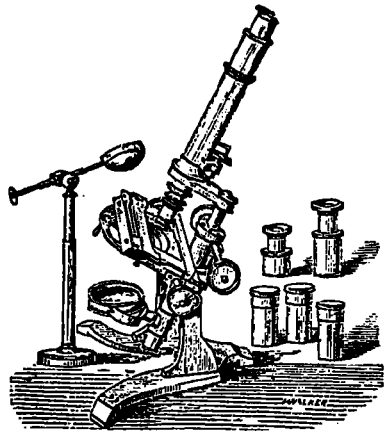
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